

**Washington, D.C.** - Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) has earned the Small Business Council of America's 2008 Congressional Award for her work on ensuring small business access to health and retirement benefits. It is Bean's fourth pro-business award in as many months.

The Small Business Council of America (SBCA) represents over 20,000 small businesses across the nation on tax, health care, pension and other benefit issues. Its annual award is presented to only two members of each chamber of Congress. Bean earned this year's award for her work on behalf of small businesses. She chairs the Small Business Committee's Subcommittee on Tax and Finance and serves on the Financial Services Committee, where she championed small-business tax incentives in the 2008 Economic Stimulus bill.

"We are honoring Congresswoman Bean because of her dedication to assisting small businesses, including her willingness to jump into some of the most complicated provisions of the tax code, such as those dealing with retirement plans, in order to help small businesses," said SBCA Chair Paula Calimafde. "Many give lip service to trying to understand complicated technical tax provisions, but Congresswoman Bean actually walks the walk. At the same time she understands what makes small businesses tick and how to promote their growth. It's a rare combination."

"I am honored to receive this recognition from the Small Business Council of America," Bean said. "The majority of domestic jobs created are in the small business sector, and I am committed to providing a voice for our nation's entrepreneurs. I will continue to promote policies that foster a growth environment for our community businesses, including access to affordable health care, availability of capital towards investment, and ensuring a level playing field in the global economy."

Chairwoman Bean has held hearings to address concerns about access to and efficiency of the SBA loan programs, and on ways to increase small business employee participation in retirement savings plans. She is a cosponsor of the Equity for Our Nation's Self-Employed Act (H.R. 3660), which would allow the self-employed to deduct health insurance costs from their income taxes as a business expense, and allow them to forego paying payroll (FICA) taxes on these costs.

Bean is the author of the Small Business Lending Improvements Act (H.R. 1332), which would lower fees in the Small Business Administration's flagship 7(a) loan program, increase lender participation and streamline the application process. The bill has passed the House and awaits Senate action.

The SBCA's award is one of several that Bean has recently received for her work on business issues.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced that Bean received its "Spirit of Enterprise" award, presented annually to members of Congress based on their support for key business issues. Bean has won the award every year since coming to Congress in 2005.

Last month, the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) presented Bean its "Transportation Champion" award for "working tirelessly" to secure federal funding for McHenry County transportation projects that area businesses depend on. Bean has secured over \$19 million for transportation projects in McHenry County alone in recent years.

In January, the Lake County Chamber of Commerce gave Bean the "Fiscal Watchdog" award for her leadership in "bringing fiscal discipline to Washington" and consistently opposing tax increases.

Bean is a member of the Blue Dog caucus, which supports reduction of the national deficit and other fiscally conservative policies. Prior to her election to Congress, she spent 20 years in the high tech industry, running businesses in corporate America and her own consulting practice.

The SBCA award will be presented at a reception in Washington on May 7.

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